



Site Optimization for **Maximum** Lead Flow

This transcript is based on the webinar, "[Optimizing Your Site for Maximum Lead Flow](#)" presented by [Tim Ash](#), President and CEO of SiteTuners.com, and [Mike Volpe](#), VP of Marketing at HubSpot.



Mike Volpe:

I'm going to talk first for a little while and talk about how to sort of optimize your website to get more people to find your site. Then, Tim is going to share a lot of his expertise about landing pages and how you get that conversion and all his expertise about that. And then, we'll have – we're definitely going to save a good amount of time for questions at the end.

I think it's really important to set the stage for this and talk about how marketing is changing. I've got a couple stats here. Eighty-six percent of people skip television ads. 44 percent of direct mail is never even looked at. It's discarded without even people really even casting an eye upon it.

Those stats really get to the point that marketing is starting to change and a lot of those older marketing tactics, those outbound marketing tactics, are becoming less and less effective. I think that that's a real problem today as marketers, and I think that a lot of us have an addiction, and I think we've got a really, really big addiction, and I think the addiction we have is to advertising.

The problem with advertising – there's some good benefits to it, but the problem with it to me is that every time you want to get more people to find your website, every time you want to get more exposure to folks, you have to pay more and more money for that. You're not really building up anything that's a long-term asset within your company. That addiction is built from a disease, and the disease is Lazy Marketer Syndrome, because I really believe that if you're over-relying on advertising and it's the vast majority of how you're attracting people to your business, that could be a mistake. To some degree, it's being a little bit lazy.

I think the key reason why is that when you're advertising, you're renting the capability of building an audience and attracting people. You're renting that capability from someone else. And so, certainly, it could be a component of what you do, but I don't think it should be the only thing that you do, and I even would say it actually should be a minority of what you do.

And so that renting that capability, whether it's paying for Google Adwords or doing other things, I think if you want to have a long-term sustainable business, you should think about it from a different perspective. So, rather than renting that capability, I

would argue that markets today should be building assets. The reason you should be building assets is that just like a factory and the machinery in a factory, you have the capability of building up those assets. If you have machinery, there's something that would actually be providing ongoing value to your company.

I think as a marketer you can build assets as well. If you build up a website that has a lot of links and some good SEO authority and you're getting SEO traffic, I think that could be an asset. If you build up a blog that has a lot of folks that are subscribed to that blog and visit and read that blog on a regular basis, to me, that's also an asset. If you build up a big presence within social media and lots of people are following you and becoming fans and friends, I think that's an asset as well. Building up an e-mail list is an asset, too.

And to me as a marketer those are the types of things that you should think about doing. You should think about, "How am I building those assets to continue to add value to my company so I can minimize the amount of cash that I'm spending each and every month that isn't helping me build an asset?" Because the second that your credit card is over the limit, most of those advertising services immediately cut off your traffic.

There's one thing to be careful about here—your competition isn't necessarily who you think. It's not necessarily the person who sells the exact same product that you sell. Your competition to some degree is people that are trying to attract that same audience even if they sell something different. So, if you sell products to – I don't know – women, for instance, then in some ways, even though Oprah probably doesn't sell anything that you sell, her media presence and her company and her television station and things like that are competition for the attention of your customers.

In some ways, you need to think about that as you build up your marketing and do more of this inbound marketing. That's something to think about in terms of who your competition is and what you're really up against.

Now, taking that idea and marketing methodology and bringing all the different pieces together, we talk about inbound marketing. It's a combination of search engine marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, conversion, lead nurturing, supporting your sales team, things like that all in one place.

Let's talk about some more specific tips about what you can actually do, because I'm very much a kind of roll-up-your-sleeves kind of marketer, and I really believe in doing things – not just talking about them. Now, these tips that I'm going to talk about are based on a lot of our experience from all sorts of our own experience working with our 4,000 customers and also all the data we have from over 3 million websites that have been graded in Website Grader. If you haven't used Website Grader yet, you should definitely put your website in there at websitegrader.com. It gives you a free report. It's a really cool tool, and again, a lot of the things I'm going to talk about are sort of lessons gleaned from looking at that data and also the rest of our experience.

Identifying Buyer Personas

I've got three tips here, and I know that this one is actually going to be interesting, because I know that Tim has a different opinion on this, so you will get to hear both sides. But, I really feel like that your buyer persona is what should drive the content that you're creating. Think about that example and don't forget that maybe Oprah or maybe some other folks are actually your competition. It's not just the people who are selling the same products as you. It's people that are competing for those peoples' time and attention on the Web.

Really what you want to do is think about who your buyer persona is. Now, at HubSpot, we've actually taken this almost to the extreme. We've created a couple buyer personas with a lot of detail there, and one of the personas that we sell to is Marketing Mary. We've gone as far as building that up into our CRM system when we track those different personas with our sales team.

What's important is not necessarily that you get the persona 100 percent right, but if you can get it kind of 90 percent right. To me, having that ability, having that understanding of who that person is, will help you decide what content you should be producing, what content those people are more likely to share in social media, what content they're more likely to subscribe to, what things they're probably searching. Having a deeper understanding of who that person can be really, really helpful.

Companies do this in all different ways. This is actually a photo from a company called Cadence, a software company in Massachusetts. It looks like there are four people there, but the two middle figures are actually cardboard cutouts, and they've gone as far as embracing those personas as cardboard cutouts.

That's an interesting way to go to really bring those personas to life.

And I will tell you that all the content that we create here at HubSpot, we're constantly thinking about our sort of two most important personas and asking ourselves, "Would this persona like this content?" We call them by name. We say things like, "Well, would Mary really like this webinar? Is that the thing Mary would be interested in? Why would Mary share that with her friends?"

If you can have that mindset, you're going to start to think a little bit more like a media company and having that capability, again, to maybe compete more with the media moguls like Oprah and have a better shot of attracting your audience.

First, use data, but don't be a slave to it. Have some surveys, have some interviews and have some data of what your persona is doing. But again, it's really more to gain an understanding of who this person is and what their personality is like and what types of things they're interested in than to nail exactly sort of the very data driven things on this one.

I think it's really important to get personal and specific. You shouldn't have just a general idea. It's more important to actually get specific and narrow, and have a firm understanding of who these people are rather than just saying the high-level audience of, "Oh, well, our customer is a woman between 45 and 60," or something like that. I would actually get really specific even if that excludes some portions of the audience.

The perfect is the enemy of the good. Don't over-engineer this too much. It's more important to have something that you can work with and call by name to have those internal conversations about what would our persona like. From there, you can evolve and make your personas more focused and viable, more specific and better over time.

We use our personas throughout the entire company here, and I think that's really important. So, it's not just about marketing. It's about sales. It's about product development. It's about customer support. It's about finance. It is the thing that we rally around in terms of how we understand our customers. We use them not only for creating content in the marketing side of things, but also other things outside of that as well.

Publish, Don't Advertise

All right, my second tip is to publish, don't advertise. If you're advertising on this site – for most display ads on the Web, you're getting kind of a 0.2 percent or even lower than that click-through rate – 0.1 percent click-through rate. Most people ignore advertisement, right? To me that says I don't want to be the advertiser as much as I want to be the content. So, what I want to think about is how do I build up that presence? What do I do?

Here at HubSpot we publish as much as we can. We've got a blog that we publish to 40,000 subscribers and tons of readers. We do a podcast, so we actually stream this live every Friday at 4pm ET– this is HubSpot TV. We put that into iTunes as well, and we get thousands of people who watch those archives episodes there.

We do lots of videos. We've got a couple hundred videos on YouTube. We got hundreds of thousands of people that have viewed those. We upload photos. We do presentations on SlideShare. We publish eBooks, news releases—all these different things, and the reason we do all of that is because we want to have content in all these different forms of consumption including this content we're creating right now, the webinar, in order to give as many types of content to those personas that we think that they would be interested in.

We've got data that sort of backs up this thesis that if you're publishing, you can attract a lot of people to your site and into your business as leads and sales at a low cost.

We've looked at over 1,500 small-medium sized business and companies that had a blog, on average, had 55 percent more website traffic. Certainly, there are probably some other things that go along with that, because companies that have a blog are maybe a little bit more sophisticated, etc., but if you want to act like those companies that are getting more traffic, one of the key things you can do is start to blog. It gives you more pages.

Not only do you get more traffic if you start to blog and start to create content, but you also get more success in social media. The data that we looked at (from over 2,000 businesses) shows that if you have a blog, you get 79 percent more followers on Twitter. Basically, if you're creating more content, it's making you more interesting.

Content is what makes you interesting in social media, so the things that people like to share within social media, maybe a comedian or maybe someone like that, could be funny in a short status update or interesting. To me, most businesses need a little bit more than 140 characters, and that's why all these services allow you to have links in those status updates. And to me, that's the content that makes us interesting.

So, the reason HubSpot has more than 80,000 followers on Twitter is because of the content that we created. It's not because our tweets individually without those links are that interesting. The foundation of a good social media strategy is to be publishing and creating some great content.

Blogging Tips

So, let's talk about some of these tips for blogging. The first one is that the title should be keyword rich. You want to use good keywords – keywords that your personas would be searching for – in your titles.

Most of the things I've seen show that having an image in every article is good. It makes it more visually appealing. It gives people something to gravitate towards rather than just a whole bunch of text on the page.

I would use both e-mail and RSS subscription. Certainly, most blogging services include RSS. There are ways to do email subscription as well. When you publish a new blog article, it can automatically go to the people subscribing to the blog by e-mail. For us, about a third of our blog subscribers are by e-mail. Other folks have 70 or 80 percent of their blog readers subscribe by email. Some personas use RSS, some use email more, and you should have both of those available to make sure that you're making it as easy as possible for people to get your blog content if they're interested in it.

The other thing that's really important is leveraging calls to action in order to drive more traffic to your landing pages. It's important to have a call to action in every article, and that's basically a link to something where people can register, opt-in, start a trial, buy a product, something like that to get them moving down the sales and marketing process. I can tell you that by adding calls to action

to our blog, we almost tripled the number of leads we were getting from our blog.

People often ask me, “How do I get more comments?” Some of the great ways to do that: ask a question at the end of the article or be controversial. The more controversial you are, the more comments you will get. I know that from experience. Also, leave part of the issue untouched. If you completely cover a topic, you're not really leaving room for people to add something to it.

If you need article ideas, check your sent items in your email. Most people, businesses and marketers are getting questions all day long from customers and potential customers about all sorts of things. Checking and seeing how you've answered those questions can be a great way to cover popular topics. You can also look at FAQs from your sales people.

I also think it's important engage the whole company and not dump all the blogging and content-creation responsibility on one person. How do you engage the whole company? We've tried a bunch of things here at HubSpot and have 80 different people who have written for our blog. We do contests. We do public praise. We've certainly been able to garner a lot of support from our executives. We've built it into some of the employee goals for a couple of different groups in the company. Get everyone addicted to the process of blogging, the feedback and the positive loop that can happen by publishing an article.

How to Make Search Engines Happy

It's important to make all search engines happy. Search engines traditionally have looked at two fundamental things when they decide who to show in the search results on that first page when your persona, goes to make a search. They look at the context and the authority. The context is what's happening on each page of your website, and the authority is how important your website is on the Internet.

You need to be careful about the keyword selection and think about your personas—not what you want to be known as, but what your personas would call you. So, someone who does work on people who have been in a car accident and have damage to

their teeth is technically called a prosthodontist. The problem with that is, most people would call that person probably something more like a “cosmetic dentist.” If you compare the number of people searching for each of those phrases, there's a lot more people searching for a cosmetic dentist. Even though the true professional in the field would probably prefer to be known as a prosthodontist, the content that you would want to create and optimize for would be for a cosmetic dentist.

Once you have done some keyword selection and figured out what keywords your personas are going to be looking for, you should think about including those in the page title and in the URL as well as in the content and the description of the page. Those are the basic places that you could optimize to make each page show up a little bit higher in search results.

You should also think about making your site attractive to both the crawlers and the humans. If a few pictures (and no text) on a site tell the story of a resort in Vermont, Google actually doesn't know what the site is about. The pictures convey the story to me. But Google can't see those. Basically, you need to have some text that is describing your business so that the search engines could understand it.

What's interesting, though, is that authority is actually more important than your On-page SEO. So, authority is probably 70 to 80 percent of the reason why any page ranks for any given keyword phrase. Fundamentally, you need more links coming into your website. So if you have a blog, you tend to be producing more interesting content, and you get more links.

What's interesting is that you don't actually need a lot of links. Your homepage should have tons and tons of links. Pages besides your homepage, if they just have seven links incoming to those pages from other websites, that actually puts them better off than 85 percent of the pages on the Internet. Most pages on the Internet have very, very few links. Getting just seven to ten links into a given page can make a huge, huge difference.

Prepare for the Future of Search

Where is search going? Today search engines are starting to incorporate additional signals to figure out that authority. Social media has become really important and the “like” is starting to replace or become as important as the link. As people like your content or tweet your content, that is adding authority to your

website. What you want to be doing today is leveraging that phenomenon in order to build more and more authority.

Some of the things you should be doing for SEO include using keywords in the language that your buyer persona uses. Focus on great content more than technical tweaks, because that great content is what's going to attract a lot of links and a lot of "likes." Train the people creating content within your business on SEO.

My advice for the road ahead would be stop thinking like a marketer or stop thinking especially like an advertiser; think a lot more like a publisher and a socializer. That's what's going to start to attract a lot of people to your website, help you turn marketing from into an asset.

Tim Ash:

My perspective is basically looking at the world and finding that it's messed up.

Back in the early '80s, when I was at UC San Diego, it was a hotbed for usability research. In fact, I studied under Don Norman who's arguably one of the top people in the field. He was the guy that literally wrote the book on user-centered design. So, a lot of the things that you have to say, and the paying attention to the customers and to your visitors, that really resonates with me.

We've been working with lots of companies both in a consulting best practices capacity and also doing live website or landing page tests to see what actually works. That's where we get our best practices.

Unfortunately, I'm here to tell you the world is a big, messy, messed up place. The main reason for it is that we're all greedy marketers. We care about what's making money, getting more leads, getting more sales, getting our bonus at the end of the year. What we don't really care about so much are the experiences that people are having on our websites.

So, I'm going to walk you through a quick catalogue of the good, the bad and the ugly, and show you through example what I'm talking about. Hopefully, it'll energize you enough to send you into the world out there and make your little corner of it a little less ugly and a little more inviting. As a byproduct of that, you get to make a lot more money.

Designing Your Calls to Action

I'm going to start with calls to action. Here is a landing page, a pay-per-click landing page on Google Adwords, believe it or not. Imagine if you landed on this page, what's the desired call to action on this page?



Now, you'd probably have to look all over it or you'd focus in on the red section perhaps and see the "Call before December 30th." You'd see Vanna White, that pretty model, smiling and pointing at the laptop screen, the report screenshots near the bottom of the screen and in the middle. Believe or not, in this case, the iPhone is the call to action. Clicking on it where it says, "30-Day Free Trial," out of all of the other visual noise on this page is what they want you to actually do. Now, if you're like me, you probably didn't find that so obvious. I believe it took you a while to figure it out or to zero in on it.

Yet, we have these kinds of experiences all the time on the Web. This is a problem because as marketers, we want to cram everything we can into our websites and landing pages. The thinking that goes into this is, "Well, we want them to know about how wonderful we are. We want to know every feature of our product. And we want them to know – and, and, and, and," and what you get is really kind of death by 1,000 cuts.

Your conversion rate, the effectiveness of your landing page, basically, gets sacrificed for putting more and more information on

the page. You can think of it like jam on a piece of toast. If you spread it thin enough, it's just not effective or very tasty anymore, and that's what happens when you try to spread attention around a landing page and not direct people on what you're trying to get them to do.

So, my first tip is to make the call to action clear. I also call this, half-jokingly, the mother-in-law test. If your mother-in-law would figure it out, then the call to action on your page is clear enough.

Now, that doesn't mean go to the other extreme and put a big, fat button in the middle of it that says, "Press here," or, "Give me your money," or something like that. That would be, obviously, ridiculous as well. What I'm talking about is visual prioritization. I should be able to glance at a page and at a moment's notice know what's important and what's the highlight and what the interactive and actionable part of the page that you really want me to spend time on. Most of the time, that's not at all clear.

Filling Out Forms in the Attention Economy

I'd like to talk about another idea here. And this, I'll freely admit, I basically stole from Seth Godin and his excellent book, *Permission Marketing*. Once you've the visitors' attention, you'd better have a very compelling value proposition. All of us are in a kind of highly activated state—surfing around the Web, clicking on things, the TV's on, the dog's biting our leg, it's all happening at once, and we're not in a deep contemplative mood. So you have to very quickly establish the value proposition. It basically goes like this: what I need and what I value has to significantly outweigh any perceived hassle or cost to me. When I say cost, I don't mean necessarily financial cost, because it's not. What I'm really talking about is friction, annoyance... My attention has a cost.

We live in an attention economy and if you're not really laser focused on that, you're going to lose. A cost to me is wasting 30 seconds of my time, and a high cost to me is wasting 5 minutes of my team, so I'm going to cut my losses in this world of infinite information. If you don't have exactly what I want, and if the value of that doesn't outweigh the hassle and cost, I'm moving on.

One of the things that we do as greedy marketers is to ask for too much information. That creates a lot of hassle, a lot of cost for me, without creating any value. In fact, it almost makes it seem

like the value of whatever it you offer is actually less. The scales aren't going to balance.

Big companies like Adobe aren't immune to this. Believe it or not,



this is a landing page to download a free whitepaper. Of course, you can't really tell there's even a whitepaper here, unless you dive into the text of the page, but I did think it was a bit ironic that the title of the paper is "Rethinking the Role of Landing Pages and Conversion," probably a little strange if you want people to download a whitepaper and it's about landing-page effectiveness that down the right-hand side you have this incredibly long form just to allow me to download the whitepaper. Is this information necessary? I don't think so. It's just nice to have, and inside the bowels of Adobe somewhere somebody said,

"Well, if we're going to create a record in our CRM database, we need to know their industry and their intent to buy and whether they're an influence or a buyer," and all of this other garbage.

Unfortunately, they basically destroyed the chances of somebody downloading that whitepaper, and it's because we're greedy and we're asking for too much information. That scale is going way too far in the hassle direction, and it doesn't have to be a lot of hassle. Just remember that you only have light, superficial attention, like a butterfly has landed for one split-second and it could be gone, so don't do that.

Below is another example. This is one of our clients, Hearing Planet, and with Hearing Planet, again, taking a page from Seth's book, *Permission Marketing*, they're offering a bribe, a good one. If you're interested in getting a hearing aid, *The Buyer's Guide to Hearing Aids*. Now, presumably you'd want to read that before you spent thousands and thousands of dollars on the wrong one, and so they let you download it here. But look at the amount of

Fill out the form to the right to download

As an Internet user, how often have you searched for a specific item only to end up on a generic landing page? With little more than three seconds to make an impression on the visitor, interactive marketers need to make sure that their landing pages create immediate engagement.

This webcast and guide discusses strategies that empower marketers to optimize every element on a landing page, presenting ideas and best practices to improve content relevance. Adobe customer, Salesforce.com provides real world examples of how they have optimized their landing pages using analytics, testing, and targeting to achieve quick wins and drive a more relevant user experience. You'll also get tips and strategies that you can use today to create a culture of testing and web page optimization at your organization.

This webcast and guide will review

- The tips to run an effective test
- Practical steps to optimize your landing pages
- How Salesforce.com uses testing to increase leads by 57%

If you're not optimizing and testing on your website, you may be missing a huge opportunity to increase conversion. Download this webcast and guide today to get actionable tips and strategies to create a testing and optimization culture at your company.

Please provide the following information:

FIRST NAME:

LAST NAME:

EMAIL:

PHONE:

COMPANY:

WEBSITE:

COUNTRY:

DEPARTMENT/FUNCTION:

JOB TITLE:

PERSONAL SITE OBJECTIVE:

INDUSTRY:

RELATIONSHIP TO COMPANY:

Click here to provide more information, allowing us to be more efficient with your request.

As the developers of Adobe Analytics, you'll be notified as soon as you've been selected for the survey. "Consent" is required for the survey. You will receive an email with the survey link and instructions. We will not share your information with any third party. You may opt out of the survey at any time. For more information, please visit our privacy policy at [http://www.adobe.com/privacy-policy](#).

We thank you for providing your contact information. We will use this information to contact you about our products and services. We will not share your information with any third party. You may opt out of our communications at any time. For more information, please visit our privacy policy at [http://www.adobe.com/privacy-policy](#).

information they're asking for. If you look closely at that form, they start asking you for your first and last name, your city, state, country and ZIP code.

Think about it, folks. This is a whitepaper download. Why do you need my mailing address? Isn't that a little bit intrusive? If this was in a normal interaction in our day-to-day lives, we'd say, "Are you kidding me?" Imagine every time you walked into a store at the shopping mall somebody at the door said, "Hi. Welcome to our shop. May I hold your credit card while you shop?" I'm sure your answer would be, "Go away." Yet we feel it's right to ask for similar intrusive, inappropriate information that we could gather

much later in the process.

conversion rate on your lead form

Now, what's left on this form is name, email and other contact information. But I think that even this is too much. Now, think to

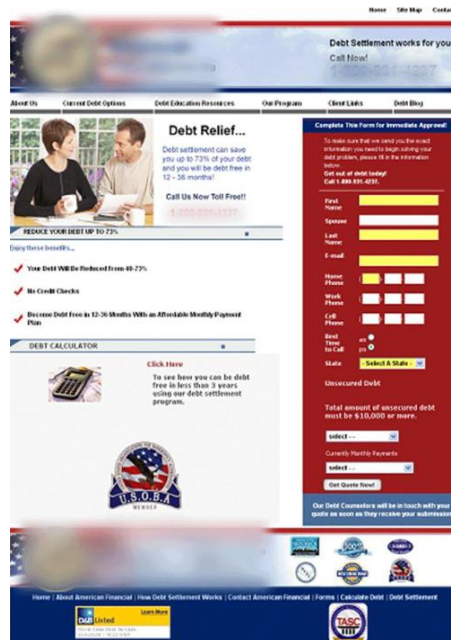


yourself: what is the minimum of information that you need to have on this page to let someone download a whitepaper? Now, a lot of you are probably thinking, "That's obvious." Just an e-mail address? To which I'd say you're still a greedy marketer and you're not thinking this through. It's a download. You don't need any information to let me download it. You just need to let me press the button that says "Download it Now."

In the case of Hearing Planet, for example, a different strategy might look something like this. We're experts on it, and a nicely formatted, professional whitepaper goes a long way towards allowing me to make a good decision, and you know what? I can share this. I can share this with the caregivers. I can share it with my insurance agency to see if I qualify. I can share it with medical providers or other people, caretakers, the children of the older parents that want to get the hearing aid or maybe don't want to get the hearing aid. All of this extended, viral spread of this whitepaper can't happen if someone didn't download it in the first place.

Folks, you haven't lost anything. If they find your whitepaper credible, then they're much more prime to buy from you or interact with you, and there's a link in the whitepaper. It says, "Come back now. Schedule your hearing test anywhere in the country." That's powerful. The only thing you lost was knowing who they are and letting them act on their timing on their time frame. So, really think: How much information do they really need?

Below is another example. This is a lead-generation form for a debt-negotiation company. They sell off leads they get for people who are in debt to other debt-negotiation firms. And they have a pretty imposing form, as you can see. It's a burgundy form. It asks a lot of questions: for first name, last name, spouse, work phone, cell phone, home phone, best time to call and blah, blah, blah. And we asked them, "What do you do with this information?" Surprisingly, their answer was, "We call them. We pick up the phone and we qualify every lead, because we can't sell junk leads or we'd be out of business tomorrow." So we said, "What is the minimum information you need to be able to qualify and call or to even know whether it's worth calling them back?" That's what ended up at the end of our landing-page test being part of the winning page. And, as you can see, the form is much shorter. They just ask for name, email, phone, state, because they have different laws in the U.S. with regard to debt negotiation, and debt amount. If you don't have a lot of debt, we can't help you.



Before redesign



Debt Relief Without Filing Bankruptcy



- Be debt free in 12-36 months
 - Avoid Bankruptcy
 - Reduce debt up to 65%
 - One Lower Monthly Payment
- Debt Settlement is the fastest and least expensive option to get out of debt without filing bankruptcy.

Call Us Now Toll-Free!!

Experience You Can Trust

- Thousands of satisfied clients
- Reduce your debt by up to 65%
- Avoid CCCS & bankruptcy
- Become debt-free in 36 months or less
- One lower monthly payment

Free Debt Consultation
Or call 1-800-591-4287

First Name

Last Name

E-mail

Phone

State

Debt Amount



After redesign
+51%

And this page performed 51 percent better for both the forms filled and propensity to pick up the phone and call the 800 number. This was a \$48 million-a-year value. So, again, the takeaway is make things simple. Don't ask for information you don't need. Have a very strong filter for adding fields to your forms. It should go like this, "Is this information absolutely necessary to complete the current transaction? Absolutely necessary?" If it's not, take it off. Do I need it now, or is it a nice-to-have that I can gather later when I deepen my relationship with the prospect or the client?

Don't ask for stuff that you can collect later. Yes, it's a little more work to collect it in pieces, and it may drive your IT guys crazy, because their database records are not complete. That's okay, but you're going to have happy humans. You're going to have happy customers and prospects, and that's much, much more important.

Optimizing Landing Pages

Let me ask you a simple question: Do you like sitting in front of your computer monitor and reading novels? There's iPad. There's Kindle. There are all kinds of things better than sitting in front of your computer at 72 dots per inch and reading off of your monitor. Well, you're not alone; nobody likes to read on the Web. Nobody likes to read on the Web, because the Web is not designed for reading novels, so don't write novels on your landing pages and on your Web site. Don't have a ton of text.

Now, here's a perfect example, Canyon Tours.

The screenshot shows the Canyon Tours website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, TOURS & ACTIVITIES, GALLERY, LINKS, TERMS, FAQS, and GROUPS. Below this is a header for "Grand Canyon Train Tours" with a background image of the Grand Canyon. The main content area is divided into several sections: "Canyon Tours - Grand Canyon", "Grand Canyon Train Tours", "Classes of Service", "General Information", and "How to Find the Tours and Activities that Interest You". The text is dense and difficult to read, with many lines of text in a small font. There are also several images of the Grand Canyon and the train. On the right side, there's a "Your Reservations Cart" section and a "Search for a tour / activity" section. At the bottom, there's a list of tour options with dates and prices.

This page, again, is a pay-per-click landing page on Google Adwords. They have just a boatload of text in it, and that text is essentially unreadable. You're using correct grammar and punctuation and complete sentences and paragraphs, and it's guaranteed to be boring. It's that simple. Remember, you're just in a highly kind of activated state on the Web. We're not reading. We're scanning for information. We're looking for headlines, for sub-headlines, for links or graphics or buttons to click on. We're not reading, folks. It's like the old Charlie Brown cartoons, where whenever an adult talked in a class, all the kids would hear would be, "Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah," and that's exactly what people are seeing when they see correctly formatted text like this on your page: "Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah." I guarantee you they're not reading it.

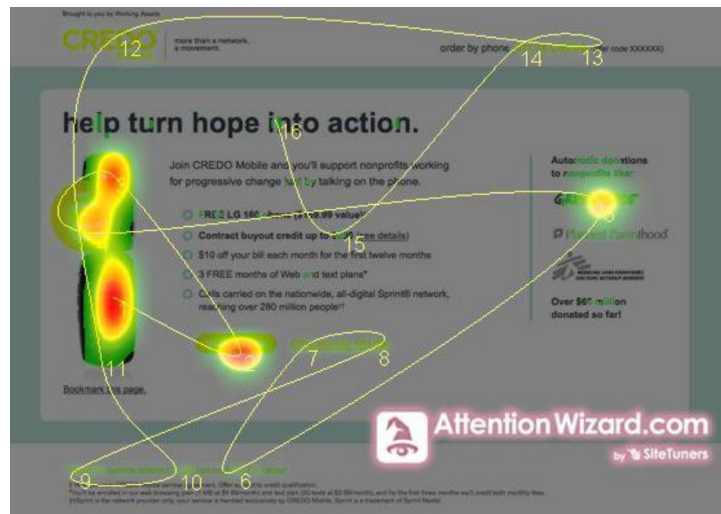
So, if you have a lot of legal boilerplate that you have to put on your page, that is okay. Throw it up there, all 17 scrolling paragraphs of it, because good news: Hey, no one's going to read it. But don't do that with your marketing copy, because you're shooting yourself in the foot. Write clear headlines, just a few bullet points and don't wrap them. Keep your thoughts concise and tight. Jacob Nielsen has presented at our conversion conference in the past as a keynote. He's probably the undisputed godfather of Web usability, and he's done study after study over a long time that says less is more. Cut down on the amount of text and increase readability and recall, you also increase conversion, so don't tell me the whole story. Otherwise, you're not going to get my money.

Trust Factors

I want to switch gears a little bit and talk about trust. We had a landing page for one of our clients, CREDO Mobile, out of the Bay Area, and what I'm about to show you is what we call an attention-wizard heat map of their landing page. It's a little hard to see, but I just want you to get the general gist of it. It's for a cell phone offer, and the highlights you're seeing all over, those yellow hotspots, are where we predict attention's going to go during the first few seconds of their visit on the landing page.



What you're seeing here are a hotspot on the left of the page with some activation around the phone picture near the right. You're not getting a lot of activation around the green button that's the "get the offer" button in the middle of the page. So what we did is an "express review" of their page and, with their designer's help, redesigned it or what we call "express fix."



Above is the new page that we came up with. One of the things that we added to it besides the offer was logos of the companies that they give money to, charities. They're a progressive company. One of the things they pride themselves on is the fact that they gave out over \$60 million to Greenpeace and Planned Parenthood and Doctors Without Borders and all of these better-known brands. You might not have heard of CREDO Mobile before I mentioned them, but I'm sure you've heard of some of those organizations.

So, we ran this through the attention wizard several times to make sure we got it just right, and notice where the hotspots are on this page. Of course, they're on the phone. It's on the new button, as you saw, the orange button down below. But we also intentionally, very carefully, brought attention to the right side of the screen so you'd be influenced by those trust symbols. By focusing attention away from CREDO in effect and towards the trust symbols that were on the page in the form of those charity logos, we were able to increase conversion by 84 percent.

So, trust really matters. Trust can be piled onto your page in a variety of ways: you can add reviews, the number of clients, the years you've been in business. Why is it so compelling when you walk into the hardware store it says "since 1979?" Well, that means you can trust them, and the same goes for online businesses. Even a few years of being up on the Internet is a real badge of honor and means you're a survivor and are steady and solid. The same thing is true of media mentions, those liberally, "as seen on," any kind of trade associations or groups that you belong to. Of course, if you're in B2B, you're marquee client logos can be a very powerful way to build trust. You combine and group

all of those things on your page and segregate them into a trust section, and all of a sudden you have a much higher form-completion rate and the cash register's going to be ringing more often.

This is not rocket surgery, but it does require you to take off the rose-colored glasses, see your baby as ugly. Your landing page is your baby. It's your ugly baby. Don't look for good things and pat yourself on the back with the fact that you're making money with your Web site or landing pages. Look for the problems, and then go and fix them. These are things that you should be able to spot at a moment's notice on your page and then just go in and change. It might be as simple as a headline change or using a different graphic or toning down your covers a bit, and you're going to see a lot of improvement.

If you're interested in one of our interactive express reviews, which we record via GoToMeeting with all of your questions, I would suggest that you go to ExpressReview.com, and I would view the first three reviews. If you mention HubSpot Webinar in the comment field when you sign up, I will read them personally. So, just wanted to throw that out there, and also, as some of you may already know, we have an international conference series called Conversion Conference. Next event is coming up here March 14th and 15th in San Francisco. I really urge you to get there if you can, and there's a special promo code that HubSpot's been kind enough to provide. If you register with CCW920, you will get \$250.00 off of the registration.

Mike Volpe:

Thanks, Tim. Great stuff! We also have a special offer here at HubSpot. Sort of the next step in our process, if you're interested, is to talk to an expert, and it's no cost. It's no obligation, and you can get basically a [free custom assessment](#) of your overall Web site. How optimized is it to attract lots of people? Is it set up right for the search engines? Is it set up right to do the right things in terms of social media and just sort of the overall optimization of your site? You can do that at HubSpot.com/IMA, which stands for [Inbound Marketing Assessment](#).



Popular Questions

Can you address prequalifying versus asking too much information on forms?

Tim Ash:

Well, if you have a B2B sale and the ultimate sale is worth \$1 million and the sale cycle is 6 to 12 months, you're not going to want to push somebody off. It's worth for you to talk to a few prospects in order to uncover that \$1 million deal. On the other hand, if you're selling something for \$19.99, it's probably not even worth putting up your telephone number, because you don't want to interact with these people in person at all, whom you'd lose money on every time the phone rings. So, it really depends mostly on the economics of the business and how many steps are involved in the qualifying process. If you're going to talk to them anyway, I would ask for a minimum of information and pick up the rest in a conversation that may last 30 seconds.

Why does HubSpot have long forms if they are not good for conversions?

Mike Volpe:

There's another marketing expert called David Meerman Scott, who is an advocate for not having a form and just putting all your content out there. Then people will eventually contact you when they're really interested.

We do a variety of things at HubSpot. Sometimes, we release e-books and things like that and there's no registration form at all. Sometimes, we ask for email address. Sometimes, it's more than that. The truth is always proven out by the numbers. Is the value of the data that you're collecting, and are those extra three or four fields worth the difference in conversion rate?

If you test a form that has two or three fields and you get a 50 percent conversion rate and then another form that has seven fields, has a 30 percent conversion rate, what is that difference in the number of people filling that out? What is that worth to you? And maybe, at times, you're actually willing to give up on fewer leads because you're actually using that information in your sales process. We've done a fair amount of that testing here at HubSpot, and for us, we're relatively comfortable that our forms are at the right place for our business. But, again, I think that really depends on what you're trying to accomplish and the value of that information. Is that the right way to think about it, Tim?

Tim Ash:

Yeah, I would agree. You should certainly test it head to head to see the impact on conversion rate by making a shorter or longer form, but the other thing I would say is never put on stuff that

you're not going to act on right away. If you don't have a specific campaign geared around that extra information or question you're asking and you're going to use that as a business rule to decide something, don't put it on the form.

Mike Volpe:

I totally agree with that. But at least for us we've got a maybe somewhat sophisticated sales process. We do use all that information in figuring out what our follow-up plan is and things like that, and if people want to hear more about that, I did that debate that I referenced with David Meerman Scott. You can go to HubSpot.com/debate, and that will take you to the page that has basically David and I talking about whether you should lock up some of your content behind forms, etc.

What is a reasonable visitor-to-read conversion rate that you should expect from your landing page?

Tim Ash:

There's no number. There's beat what you have. It's that simple. It depends on way too many things. It depends on your brand strength, your marketing campaigns, your traffic sources, what you're promising upstream and visitors' intent when they get there, so just to fill out a form can be anywhere from 5 to 25 percent, I'd say, but that's such a wide range that it becomes meaningless. I can tell you one thing: Whatever you have, I can beat it or you can beat it, so keep improving and knocking off the champion.

How do you identify buyer personas?

Mike Volpe:

I think if you really have no idea who's buying your product, then, yes, it could be hard to identify them, but I think most people should have some idea, and there's a couple different techniques. Start talking to the people that do the most work with your customers. Ask them, "If you had to put our customers into a couple buckets, what would those buckets look like? Tell me about the person that you think is our most typical customer." Start to do some of that work, and that will put you in the right direction. If you have any survey data about your customers, you can start to do some analysis of those things as well.

Isn't reducing the text on your landing pages killing SEO opportunities?

Tim Ash:

There is a balance there. The point is not to interfere with the good user experience. At the top of the page you can have things composed mostly of graphics, navigating somewhere else and

deeper into the site. Then, at the bottom pile on all the SEO text you want. But you know what? I think that's old-school thinking, too. From my understanding, only about a third of your SEO kind of power comes from the stuff that's on your page. Most of it, as Mike mentioned, comes from authoritative outside links and off-page factors, so don't let the SEO stuff paralyze you into never improving your user experience.

How do you manage to transform a blog reader into a lead?

Mike Volpe:

We have a call to action in every single blog article at the bottom, and that call to action is related to the content of the blog article. For instance, maybe we wrote an article about, landing-page optimization or improving lead flow. That would probably have a call to action to sign up for this webinar. Now that we've grown our blog into a big, successful asset, a good media property, it is one of our top three sources of leads for HubSpot. So if you have the right calls to action and build up an audience on your blog, your blog can become an important source of leads too.

What is the best way to drive people to a landing page?

Tim Ash:

I don't know that there is a best way. It really depends on your audience. You want to make sure there's an alignment between what's happened upstream on your page and on your page. That's really critical, so basically keep your promises, whatever their intent was, whatever they were expecting in your ad copy, in your tweet, in your comparison-shopping fee description, that better be on the page when you get there.

What about the risk for negative comments on your blog? How do you reduce that risk?

Mike Volpe:

So, I'm not sure that I necessarily want to. Who cares if somebody says something negative? They could say that anywhere on the Net. If people are going to say negative things about you, I'm not sure that you starting or not starting a blog is going to necessarily encourage more or less of that. People are going to say bad things about you. People today have a huge voice and this huge megaphone, because they can leave

comments all over the Web. They can post stuff on Facebook and Twitter. They can start their own blog. All those things are really easy to do.

If you keep your blog content relatively positive, I think you tend to get fewer troll-like or negative comments. If you're the type of blogger that's throwing a lot of mud and criticizing other folks, you will tend to get more comments that are like that as well. To some degree, the voice you set with your blog will impact the voice of the comments that you receive. To me, the benefit of starting the blog far outweighs any risk of potential negative comments you would get, except maybe something really extreme, highly politically charged.

Do you have any insights on including multiple links on a landing page and how that impacts conversions?

Tim Ash:

It's okay to have multiple goals on your page, but I would say if you have more than three to four choices it's probably a really bad idea. So what you need to do is group them into regions. What we often talk about is what I call "engagement continuum." Imagine three side-by-side boxes. The first one says "learn more." The other one is "download free whitepaper," and the third one says "talk to one of our sales reps." You get more engagement at every step of the process, so going from the "I don't care at all" to the "I might care a little bit about what you're doing." If you organize things logically like that, side by side, then people will self-select into the right activity and whatever they're comfortable with.

Additional Resources

- [SEO for Lead Generation Kit](#)

- [Think Like a Publisher: 3 Tips to Generate More Leads](#)
- [25 Ways to Increase Sales and Lead Generation](#)
- [Optimize Your Sales & Marketing Funnel](#)<http://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing-assessment/>



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